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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, September 11, 1936.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THE WELL-PREPARED MEAL." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Of all the problems that harass a homemaker, I think everyone will agree that meal-planning is the most inescapable. Three squares a day, week in and week out, rain or shine, for better or worse-- hold on! My complaint seems to be taking me right up to the steps of the altar! Anyway the meal problem starts almost as soon as the wedding bells stop pealing, and practically never lets up.

Happily this week's Market Basket holds some relief for the troubled meal-planner in the form of a seasonable menu. It's really an elastic menu, for if you don't care for the combination suggested, you can change it to suit yourself within the groups of foods to be had at this time of year.

"Probably the best meat buys just now," quoting from the Market Basket," are forequarter cuts of beef and lamb. Among the vegetables are fresh tomatoes, sweet corn, green beans, limas, fresh cabbage, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, squash. Among the fruits, grapes, pears, plums, melons, peaches. From such a variety it is not difficult to select most of the makings of a good meal. Add bread and butter, milk, coffee or tea, supply some seasonings, and whether the dinner is good now depends on how it is prepared."

In other words, the bureau's specialists explain, the cook must know how to get the best results with each food by itself and with all of them together. She must know how to time each food so that everything will be cooked to a turn and ready to serve without having to stand. She must also think of variety in texture, flavor, and color. For example, if she serves two creamed vegetables at one meal the white sauce would make them too much alike in texture and would probably obscure the flavors. Two fried foods would be a poor choice because there would be too much fat in the meal and too much of the browned flavor.

Well, friends, the difficulties are great, but they're not insuperable. Here are the materials selected in the "Market Basket" from the list of seasonable foods we've mentioned: "Beef, sweet corn, green beans, tomatoes, lettuce, and a fruit. Bread, milk, coffee or tea." Quoting directly:

"With an eye to cost, let us have Swiss steak, since it utilizes one of the cheaper cuts of beef-- a fairly thick piece from the chuck, rump, or round. It is made tender by slow cooking in a little water and under cover, so that it is really steamed or braised."

It takes about 2 hours to cook the Swiss steak, so the dinner must be started that long in advance. "First season the meat with salt and pepper, sprinkle generously with flour, and pound thoroughly," the Market Basket continues. "The pounding helps to make the meat tender, and the flour absorbs the juice. Cut the

steak into individual portions and brown in suet or other fat in a heavy skillet. Then add water enough to cover. Partly cover with a lid, and simmer for 1-1/2 to 2 hours, or until the meat is tender enough to cut with a fork. There should be plenty of good gravy to serve over the meat.

"Of the vegetables for this dinner, the corn and beans will be cooked, the others served raw." The green beans will take just a little longer to cook than the corn,- probably 15 to 20 minutes, while to corn takes 5 to 15 minutes. So start the beans cooking about 20 minutes before meal-time, and the corn shortly afterwards, depending on whether or not the ears have close or deepset kernels. Of course you will be careful to take off all bits of corn silk and shuck from the ears. A stiff vegetable brush is a help in getting them off. Drop the ears of corn, when the time comes, in a kettle of rapidly boiling water. Then let them simmer uncovered for 5 to 15 minutes. But do not cook too long or the corn will toughen, and if white corn, it will turn yellow if the water is hard. If the corn is to be cut off before serving, cook it first, then cut off with a very sharp knife as close as possible without getting particles of the cob. Reheat over hot water, season with butter and salt, and serve. Or cut the corn off the cob before cooking, and cook over hot water, seasoning in the same way, adding perhaps some chopped green pepper.

"Get the green beans as fresh from the garden as possible, wash them thoroughly, remove the strings and the tips, and break or cut them in short pieces. Drop them into a small quantity of boiling water. To preserve their green color, cook them uncovered, and until just tender but still a little crisp. If time permits the best way of cutting beans up is to shred them lengthwise, either with a knife or with a bean shredder. Then you'll get rid of the strings without fail. Season green beans with butter, pepper and salt, or with crisp bits of salt pork or bacon."

The Market Basket recommends a simple raw salad of lettuce and tomatoes to supply textures, flavors, and colors not furnished by either of the cooked vegetables. The lettuce must be cool and crisp, the tomatoes ripe and fresh. Dip them in hot water long enough to loosen the skin, remove the skin and chill the tomatoes. (Probably you'll want to get the tomatoes ready earlier in the day so as to have them well chilled.) Just before serving time cut the tomatoes in quarters which hold together at the stem end. Serve in the midst of curling lettuce leaves, the tomato sections opening at the top. French dressing, plain or with Roquefort cheese crumbled into it, and a crisp cracker, go with this cool salad.

When it comes to fruit for dessert, shall it be fresh grapes, pears, plums, melons, or peaches? How about baked pears served with hot little cup cakes? Is the day too warm? Then peaches, sliced just before serving time, and sprinkled with sugar to keep them, so far as possible, from turning dark. If you plan to have melons they should be thoroughly cooled before cutting. Or you can protect the cut surfaces and put the pieces in the refrigerator until dessert time. Putting cracked ice in half a cantaloupe or honey ball washes out the flavor and makes the flesh soft and watery.

Other dessert suggestions are for plum pie and grape tapioca pudding, but there isn't time to give you recipes today. Don't forget to plan your bread-rolls or hot biscuits, nicely browned, or just slices of bread.

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